

Palm Springs
Office of Neighborhood
Involvement



Palm Springs Neighborhood
Involvement Committee

**2008 Annual Report
to City Council**



Submitted by: Lee Husfeldt, Director
Office of Neighborhoods and Community Relations

February 11, 2009



City of Palm Springs

Neighborhood and Community Relations

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February 11, 2009

Palm Springs City Council,

The City's neighborhood organization program continues to strengthen our community. Now in its fourth year, the program has swelled to 22 neighborhood organizations – a large volunteer program working with our City government.

Attached is an annual report highlighting the accomplishments of the Palm Springs Neighborhood Involvement Committee and the individual neighborhoods this past year. They have worked with the City to enact ordinances, establish programs and walk the path to a sustainable community.

The report also looks ahead, outlining some of the objectives for 2009. One of those is growth – both in the number of neighborhood organizations and the number of members within each organization.

The last page is from the Chairman of the Palm Springs Neighborhood Involvement Committee (PSNIC), evaluating from the Committee's perspective whether the City has provided timely notice to the group of City Actions and whether the City was responsive to the Committee. The ordinance requires such a report.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Husfeldt
Director of Neighborhood and Community Relations

Neighborhoods are the soul of a city. In only four years, the City's neighborhood program has taken root with a vibrant organization working together to build neighborhoods into community.

HISTORY

Recognizing the importance of citizen participation in local government, the City Council passed an ordinance in April 2005, establishing the Office of Neighborhood Involvement to foster communication between residents and the City within a system of Neighborhood Involvement.

MEMBERSHIP

The first year after the ordinance passed there were eight officially recognized neighborhood organizations in the new program eagerly working to translate their intentions into reality and then sustain them. Three more neighborhoods were added in 2006 and four in 2007. However, 2008 proved to have the most growth since that first year, with seven neighborhood organizations joining the Office of Neighborhood Involvement. We have more people willing to take on responsibility for their neighborhood, and, as a result, their community. At the end of 2008, 22 neighborhood organizations are working in the program with membership of more than 2,650. The neighborhood organizations are listed below with their membership count:

Araby Cove Neighborhood Organization* -- 49

Baristo Neighborhood Organization -- 212

El Mirador Neighborhood Organization -- 105

Chino Canyon Neighborhood Organization -- 36

Desert Highland Gateway Estates Community Action Association* -- 11

Deepwell Estates Neighborhood Organization -- 308

Demuth Park West Neighborhood Organization* -- 77

Desert Vista Neighborhood Organization -- 130
Four Seasons Neighborhood Organization* -- 90
Historic Tennis Club Neighborhood Organization -- 178
The Mesa Neighborhood Organization* -- 94**
The Movie Colony Neighborhood Organization -- 85
Old Las Palmas Neighborhood Organization -- 269
Racquet Club Estates Neighborhood Organization* -- 102
Racquet Club South Neighborhood Organization* -- 21
Racquet Club West Neighborhood Organization -- 129
Ruth Hardy Park Neighborhood Organization -- 113
Sunmor Neighborhood Organization -- 115
Sunrise-Vista Chino Neighborhood Coalition -- 91
Tahquitz River Estates Neighborhood Organization -- 192
Vista Las Palmas Neighborhood Organization -- 190
Warm Sands Neighborhood Organization -- 56

* Joined ONI in 2008

* The Mesa Neighborhood Advisory Committee has expressed its concern about providing personal information such as the names of the members of the organization and the streets where they live. The organization is expected to vote Feb. 17, whether to submit this information to the City.

PALM SPRINGS NEIGHBORHOOD INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

Officially recognized neighborhood organizations come together and form the Palm Springs Neighborhood Involvement Committee (PSNIC), each represented by a representative and an alternate, selected by their neighborhood organization. In 2008, PSNIC formally adopted the following mission statement:

The mission of the Palm Springs Neighborhood Involvement Committee is

to serve as a collective voice in expressing issues of mutual interest to Palm Springs Neighborhood Organizations;

to work with City staff and elected officials to develop solutions and responses to matters of mutual interest to Palm Springs Neighborhood Organizations;

to strengthen the system of Neighborhood Involvement by providing tools and resources to existing and newly forming Palm Springs Neighborhood Organizations;

to provide opportunities, processes and communication channels that help Palm Springs Neighborhood Organizations empower citizens to become active participants in securing and enhancing the safety, character and enjoyment of their neighborhood environment.

PSNIC meets monthly, the second Thursday of each month, from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m., at City Hall and attracts excellent attendance. The City Council's liaison to PSNIC, Councilmember Ginny Foat and City Manager David Ready attend the monthly meetings along with City staff. These meetings provide opportunity for the neighborhood organizations to network, share ideas and issues, receive presentations and updates on City programs and plans, and hear from the PSNIC subcommittees. It is here, through participation, education and the encouragement of diverse perspectives that innovative solutions and consensus can be found.

PSNIC OFFICERS

PSNIC elects officers in December of each year. The PSNIC officers for 2008 were:

Chairperson John Williams

Vice Chairperson for Neighborhood Formation Bob Mahlowitz

Vice Chairperson for Neighborhood Support Jim Lundin

Secretary William Post

Treasurer David Carden, Jr.

2008 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2008, PSNIC organized its work through the following subcommittees:

- Policies and Procedures
- Finance
- Communication
- Neighborhood Formation
- Neighborhood Support
- Code Enforcement
- Crime and Safety
- Neighborhood Character
- Ecology

In 2008, recognizing that sustaining and supporting neighborhood organizations was an emerging need, a new vice chair position was added to PSNIC to institutionalize a program of neighborhood support. Initially established as a task force to explore the needs of the neighborhood organizations and recommend ways to provide organizational support, PSNIC voted to transition the task force to a standing Neighborhood Support Subcommittee. The subcommittee developed a curriculum that will be a guide for organizational development, addressing membership and leadership recruitment, leadership training and outreach strategies.

In step with the Palm Springs Path to a Sustainable Community, PSNIC formed an Ecology Subcommittee which has been distributing conservation information. The subcommittee helped organize the neighborhoods' participation in November's Sustainability Summit kickoff where each neighborhood organization received a coupon for a free water conservation irrigation system controller. The Desert Water Agency is monitoring the water usage of those residents who volunteered to install the controllers and is making the residents aware of their savings.

Major Accomplishments of PSNIC and the individual neighborhood organizations in 2008 include:

- Having 22 officially recognized neighborhood organizations.
- Establishing a neighborhood identification blade sign program.
- Working for the approval of a Zoning Code amendment to allow for neighborhood monument signs.
- Working for the passage of the vacation rental and event house ordinances.
- Working for the passage of the abandoned building ordinance.
- Working with the City to establish procedures for PSNIC and neighborhood organizations to raise funds through the City's 501 (C) (3) status.
- Working with the Police Department in the establishment of the Neighborhood Police Officer program.
- Recruiting residents to take part in the Neighborhood Leadership Academy presented by the Police Department.
- Working with Parks & Recreation to amend the ordinance to allow youth concerts in the stadium.
- Obtaining a \$1,000 Preservation Grant for a historically devoted neighborhood Web site.

- Securing funds for the Tahquitz Creek Channel master plan which is currently underway.
- Conducting neighborhood clean-up events.
- Working with the City to have a dilapidated house demolished.
- Closing off the east end of Livmor, making it a cul-de-sac.
- Participating in the Palm Springs Path to Sustainability.
- Holding a Sustainable Neighborhoods Expo showcasing energy and water conservation, sustainable building materials and Smart Development concepts.
- Holding an eco-friendly landscape tour in April attended by approximately 95 people. The self-guided tour showcased drought-tolerant landscaping in several neighborhoods, with a goal of giving neighbors ideas for their own yards.
- Hosting a PSNIC picnic and expo with 394 people attending, including people from all 17 (at that time) neighborhood organizations.
- Establishing brown bag lunches – an opportunity for neighborhood leaders to meet informally and exchange information.
- Publishing a promotional brochure encouraging people to get connected and get involved in their neighborhood.
- Obtaining printing discounts for neighborhood organizations at both Office Max and Office Depot.

2009 – THE YEAR AHEAD

People used to buy their homes based on location, location, location. Now it could easily be based on communication, communication, communication. Communication from City government to the neighborhoods, neighborhoods to the City, but most importantly, neighbor to neighbor. From this communication, relationships are built. Good neighbors are people who know each other and are concerned for one another. This caring is the fabric that knits this community together. You do not just want to live in a house; you want to live in a neighborhood with caring people. These neighborhoods exist in Palm Springs

and more neighborhood organizations are forming. PSNIC set an objective for 2009 to build its membership to 25 neighborhood organizations and close the gaps between existing neighborhoods. Another part of that objective is to increase membership in neighborhood organizations by 10 percent.

Communication is a key component to the success of ONI, PSNIC and the neighborhood organizations. The City uses PSNIC as an information clearinghouse, and will be working with the Committee to identify every communication tool and mechanism available to allow the neighborhood organizations to communicate more readily and effectively with their residents.

City staff is focused on providing timely communication. For example, we are providing information regarding proposed development almost as soon as we receive it by e-mailing PSNIC the weekly submittal of new cases to the Planning Services Department. Now in 2009, certain projects will be required to post on-site signs advising the neighbors about the pending development application so they are informed about the project and can participate in the development process, if they so choose. This advanced developer dialogue came about thanks to members of PSNIC working with the City's Planning Services Department.

It is through communication that relationships are built, extending not only into the neighborhood, but to City government. For example, each of the City's code compliance officers is assigned a section of the City and our neighborhoods are encouraged to know who their code officers are and how to reach them.

More relationships have developed with the Police Department through the new Neighborhood Police Officer program, which has a sergeant and two officers assigned to each of the neighborhood organizations. The residents met their police officers and now have their contact information.

The relationships that are being built because of ONI and PSNIC are making our community stronger. People who care are stepping forward, watching out for one another and working together to improve the quality of life in their neighborhood and in Palm Springs. In a disaster, relationships and communication will pay off. Both the Office of Neighborhood Involvement and PSNIC stress that neighborhoods have people attend the Community Emergency Response Team Training. The Four Seasons Neighborhood, which joined the Office of Neighborhood Involvement in 2008, has 37 CERT trained residents.

One sure way to build relationships, and membership, within neighborhood organizations is through social activities. The social aspect of these organizations plays a large part in their success. These people come together at potlucks, progressive dinners, wine & cheese socials, holiday parties, neighborhood picnics, house tours, block parties, and neighborhood garage sales. One neighborhood is even starting a walking and hiking group.

They have even found the social aspect in community service projects. The Tahquitz River Estates, Warm Sands, Historic Tennis Club and Deepwell Estates neighborhood organizations adopted the Tahquitz Creek Channel and under the umbrella of the Tahquitz Creek Yacht Club, conduct monthly clean ups (since 2006) and continuous monitoring of graffiti and homeless encampments. They are also working with the City on a master plan for that area that will include landscaping and an expanded trail system.

PSNIC will also be walking the Path to Sustainability as it identifies actions to achieve cultural and behavioral changes to make sustainability a success.

In going to the various neighborhoods, whether it is an established area or an organization that is just forming, you find that people like where they live. They have a sense of pride in their neighborhood. Recently it was suggested that PSNIC consider hosting a Good Neighbor Awards Gala that will recognize the

volunteer efforts of neighborhood residents and businesses that support neighborhood efforts. A fund-raising component may also be established to raise funds for neighborhood programs.

After four years of energizing the City's neighborhood system, PSNIC will review and recommend refinements to the ordinance that the program operates under.

It is said that there is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer. These strong-hearted volunteers make our neighborhoods places where people want to live. Palm Springs continues to be a City of great neighborhoods because our residents choose to make a difference in the places where they live.



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To: John Williams, Chairman
Palm Springs Neighborhood Involvement Committee
From: Lee Husfeldt
Re: 2008 Communication Evaluation

Mr. Williams,

Communication at all levels is key to the success we've experienced with the Palm Springs Neighborhood Involvement Program. It is so important, that the ordinance that created the Office of Neighborhood Involvement calls for both the Neighborhood Involvement Committee to evaluate the City's communication efforts.

This evaluation from the Palm Springs Neighborhood Involvement Committee (PSNIC) will be included in the 2008 annual report to the City Council.

In the short time since the Office of Neighborhood Involvement has been in existence, we have formed partnerships of open communication by establishing mechanisms for two-way communication between the City and PSNIC. We have encouraged direct participation and championed diverse perspectives which have led to innovative solutions and consensus.

As you know, the City Manager attends the PSNIC monthly meetings to keep you up to date, hear your issues and answer your questions. The City also uses PSNIC as a clearing house, providing committee members with written public hearing notices, information on upcoming special events, news releases, City meeting agendas, street work notices and weekly updates.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, from the perspective of the Palm Springs Neighborhood Involvement Committee, has the City provided timely notice to the Committee of City Actions and whether the City was responsive to the Neighborhood Involvement Committee?

1 2 3 4 5

Comments from PSNIC Chair John Williams: I think the City of Palm Springs does provide timely notice to PSNIC, and is improving all the time. I also think response to PSNIC issues is improving. They can always do better. We can also do better in describing issues in a non-confrontational way and by providing suggested course of action to staff and Council. When we have done that, we have met with very good response.